

Claims

1. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:
- 5 a) providing apparatus for electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of a nerve;
- b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;
- c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres of said nerve.
- 10 2. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:
- a) providing apparatus for stimulating the respiratory centre by electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of a nerve;
- 15 b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;
- c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres of said nerve and hence stimulate the respiratory centre.
- 20 3. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:
- a) providing apparatus for electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of the phrenic nerve;
- b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;
- c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres.
- 25 4. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:
- a) providing apparatus for stimulating the respiratory centre by electrically stimulating one or more afferent fibres of the phrenic nerve;
- 30 b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;
- c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said one or more afferent fibres of the phrenic nerve and hence stimulate the respiratory centre.
- 35 5. A method of treating sleep apnoea and/or snoring in a patient which includes the steps of:
- a) providing apparatus for stimulating the respiratory centre by electrically

stimulating the proprioceptor fibres of the phrenic nerve;

b) positioning said apparatus on or in close proximity to said nerve;

c) activating said apparatus to stimulate said fibres and hence stimulate the respiratory centre.

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6. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 – 4, wherein the afferent fibres are the large myelinated afferent fibres having a diameter in the range of 12 - 20 micrometers

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7. The method is claimed in any one of claims 1 – 6, wherein said apparatus is located wholly or partially internally of the patient.

8. The method as claimed in any one of claims 1 - 6, wherein said apparatus is located externally upon the patient, and said nerve is stimulated transcutaneously.

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9. The method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, further including the step of providing a sensor in, on, or adjacent the patient; said sensor is adapted to detect the condition to be treated and is arranged to activate said apparatus upon detecting said condition.

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10. The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the sensor is selected from the group consisting of:

- a vibration sensor;

- a transvenous lead;

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- a sound sensor;

- a thoracic impedance sensor